

CLAIMS (Draft 08.11.2003)

1. A guide for controlling web materials in laterally separate paths from a web supply to a machine for producing packing blanks, comprising:

- a frame extending transversely to a feed direction of the web;
- at least one pair of laterally separated guide rails running in parallel in said feed direction, each guide rail comprising an upper and a lower flexible strip, respectively, the strips defining a guided passage from an entrance end to an exit end of the guide rail;
- the guide rails being laterally displaceable on the frame, and
- the exit end of each guide rail connectable to the machine for producing packing blanks.

2. The web guide of claim 1, wherein at least two pairs of guide rails are laterally positioned on the frame, each pair of guide rails providing guided passage for the longitudinal margins, respectively, of an associated web.

3. The web guide of claim 1, wherein the guide rails of at least one pair of guide rails are controlled for lateral displacement on the frame in mutually opposite directions relative to a center.

4. The web guide of claim 3, wherein the center is laterally displaceable on the frame.

5. The web guide of claim 1, wherein vertical shields carried on the guide rails are operative to prevent the web material from leaving the guided passage.

6. A guide for controlling web material in laterally separate paths from a web supply to a machine for producing packing blanks, comprising:

- a frame extending transversely to a feed direction of the web;
- at least one pair of laterally separated guide rails running in parallel in said feed direction, each guide rail comprising an upper and a lower flexible strip, respectively, the strips defining a guided passage from an entrance end to an exit end of the guide rail;
- the guide rails being laterally displaceable on the frame;
- the exit end of each guide rail connectable to the machine for producing packing blanks, and
- each laterally separated path of web material being associated with a line up means, upstream of the guide rail entrance ends, for aligning the web material with the guided passage.

7. The web guide of claim 6, wherein the line up means comprises a capstan, supported on the frame and freely rotating about an axis extending transversely to the feed direction.

8. The web guide of claim 7, wherein a circumference of the capstan is defined through horizontal bars parallel with the axis of rotation, and the cord length between adjacent bars of the capstan corresponding to the distance between the fold lines of a fan fold web material.

9. The web guide of claim 6, wherein the line up means further comprises a flexible arm, reaching upstream from the entrance end and biased to press the web material towards the capstan.

10. A freely rotating capstan in a guide for feeding fan fold web material to a machine for producing packing blanks, the

capstan comprising a circumference that is defined through horizontal bars parallel with a rotation axis of the capstan, and the cord length between adjacent bars corresponding to the distance between the fold lines of a fan fold web material.

11. The capstan of claim 10, wherein the angular distance between adjacent bars is 120° , the cord lengths defining an isosceles triangle.

12. A method of producing packing blanks from web materials in a machine having multiple cutting and creasing tools individually controllable within an operative width of the machine, and feed means provided as individually operated feeding sections for feeding web materials individually in parallel feed paths through the machine, comprising the step of guiding the web materials in laterally separate paths from a side by side storage to the machine while controlling the longitudinal margins of each web in a guided passage that is laterally adjustable to accommodate the width of the web and to locate the position of each web relative to the machine.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein packing blanks are simultaneously produced from separate webs individually fed through the machine.